
THE
R E I G N
OF THE
ENGLISH ROBESPIERRE.

ADDRESSED TO THE NATION.

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THE present circumstances of this country remind me of the proverb—*Quos Jupiter vult perdere prius dementat.* An infatuation unparralleled in the history of any nation has seized upon the people in this kingdom; for a considerable time our powers seem to have been palsied, and we have viewed with indifference the most awful calamities which can afflict mortals, brought upon us by designing, obstinate, weak, and wicked men. We have seen the dreadful dogs of war let loose, and have nourished them with our own blood, and fed them upon our own vitals. Under the banners of our minister, we have hurled the thunder-bolts of battle on the heads of those guilty wretches who dared to think for themselves, and banish those minions and courtiers who consumed their substance in riot and debauchery. Let us for a moment trace the progress of our able leader, and we shall doubtless have reason to admire his talents, and applaud his virtues.

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Let us first (if we may yet dare to do so) look into the Cabinet: there we shall see him laying a deep plan for exasperating the people against French principles, and hypocritically crying, that order and religion are in danger: the cry is echoed through the hirelings of the court, and the great mass of the people at once plunge into a ruinous and unnecessary war, and they absurdly imagine it to be essential to their very existence. Policy would (one should have imagined) have dictated a different course. We once held the balance of Europe in our hands; and, secure in our fleets, in our resources, and in our rocky shores, we might have smiled at the storm which was agitating Europe, and at last have hush'd the world to peace: but, alas! the Rights of Man, those rights so formidable to corrupt statesmen, had been proclaimed in the world, and they must either be subdued, or the whole earth be made a desert. For this noble purpose, alliances the most heterogeneous must be formed; millions must be added to our vast debt; foreign armies must be paid with that money which was squeezed from the industrious tradesman and labourer, and fed with that bread which our famished peasantry have long cried for in vain; rivers of blood must be shed; manufacturers must be dragged from their labours to the field of battle; one of the bulwarks of liberty, the Habeas Corpus Act, must be torn down; contributions levied; neutral powers must be insulted and bullied; and an ancient ally, against her inclination, and contrary to her interest, must be dragged into a war which threatened her very existence. But the catalogue of court schemes is too large to go through; like the box of Pandora, the Cabinet has been pregnant with evils, and, opened by the hand of the demon of mischief, it has covered the earth with misery.

Let us now view our minister directing the councils of war:—Here we shall see him in his most noble attitude; we shall see him hurling forth the firebrand of civil war into a neighbouring country, publicly glorying in the deed, and impiously endeavouring to tear from the mouths of a famished people the common bounties of heaven; we shall see him, in conjunction with his allies, madly attempting to break through a vast chain of fortified posts, which the whole world may assail in vain; leaving two almost impreg-

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impregnable barriers, Lille and Maubeuge, and two immense armies on the right and left flanks, and advancing into a country where difficulties would increase at every step, and every individual would become an enemy; the event of the scheme has sufficiently proved its folly. We shall see him conquering a town or two in the name of the English, and putting them into the possession of the Austrians; we shall see him giving children musquets in lieu of their pop-guns, and raising them over the heads of veterans grown grey in service and experience; we shall see him commanding our troops to retreat into Holland, when they might, in the first instance, have retreated into Germany; and, by good luck, bringing them out, through a pass of not more than thirty miles, in a season the most inclement ever known, without the conveniencies, and almost without the necessaries of life, and dragging the wounded over an inhospitable country, instead of leaving them to the mercy of the French.

After we had entered upon the war, the plan of defending Holland was not, perhaps, altogether wrong; but it surely was bad policy to defend it so long, and at such hazard; and I think we may justly consider the minister as accountable for the great outlines, at least, of the plan. I do not find fault with the retreat, which, in such circumstances, appears a master-stroke of generalship; but I arraign the absurd plan which placed our brave countrymen in such an unhappy situation.

When all idea of conquering France by its Northern frontier is given up, we see him, at a vast expence, and with considerable hazard to the men, keeping the whole cavalry pent up in Germany, and absurdly expecting an opportunity for acting in conjunction with Allies who have proved both treacherous and impotent: we see him attacking Dunkirk by his troops abroad, while no effectual co-operation is prepared at home; and a floating-battery built in such a bungling style (after many ridiculous vaunts), that it could not even approach within cannon-shot of the place, and therefore wisely brought back to the river where it was prepared; we see him vainly attempting, in the face of the whole Southern French army, to
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keep possession of Toulon, its inhabitants left to the protection of an insufficient and motley garrison, and at last abandoned to the fury of the Republican armies.

In the Mediterranean we see him adding the island of Corsica to the British dominions, employing almost half the British fleet to defend it, and depending, for the subsistence of his sailors, upon the doubtful friendship of nations once hostile to the British flag. In the West Indies we see him conquering in one month, and, for want of sufficient reinforcements, losing all in the next; troops which ought to have been there to have defended the conquest, we behold in the neighbourhood of Plymouth, shut up in unwholesome transports, dying by hundreds, and at last sent at such a time as shall infallibly expose them to the hurricanes. We hear him proclaiming martial law in the islands, and thereby disgusting the natives, and arming them against the oppressed Negroes. We see him leaving our ships to the mercy of a few French frigates, and endeavouring to pick a quarrel with the only power that can preserve our Planters from starving. In the East Indies we see him leaving our commerce to the attacks of the enemy's cruizers.

Let us now view him as Director of the Marine, for I consider him as responsible for the errors in each department, as he is well known to be the *primum mobile* of each, and the Lord Paramount of all. That Chatham was a mere cypher all must allow, and that Dundas is his most confidential Counsellor is sufficiently known. That he shewed the former how to manage a hand, which was dealt him merely by a brother's partiality, and which he had not sufficient talents to play himself, is asserted upon good authority, and seems corroborated by the event; and that he is accustomed, with the latter, to plan campaigns and lay sieges over the bottle, is a fact which the state of both in the House of Commons, on the first breaking out of the War, sufficiently proves. Let us now view him as a financier, which is more properly his own department: we see him paying off the National Debt, by spending upwards of four millions in a contest with the Spaniards about Nootka Sound, which, after all, it is by no means clear that we are in

in full possession of, and which was never worth one hundredth part of the money. Of the true value of this, however, even if it be now ours, we can hardly judge, as, notwithstanding his promises to Parliament, he has hitherto preserved a sullen silence upon this subject: we see him too squandering a large sum in bullying the Empress of Russia, who only derided the attempt, and at last plainly told him she would have Oczakow, and had it. He now makes attonement by forming an alliance with this keen Politician, who, if I mistake not, will prove as treacherous as his other allies. We see him too, in order to pay off the Debt more speedily, kindly presenting the king of Prussia, the King of Sardinia, the Landgrave of Hesse, and the Elector of Hanover, with many millions of money, almost forcing a loan of more than four upon the Emperor of Germany, and guaranteeing the payment in case of his insolvency, which, after his wars, is by no means unlikely to happen. Besides this, we see him reviving antiquated claims, which, if just, ought to have been settled before; paying the arrears due to an army agent in the American War, and to the Landgrave of Hesse, for those mercenaries whom he probably got without cost, and lost without burial in the plains of America. We see him adding millions to millions in the present Crusade, till our debt has almost been doubled, and yet his friends impudently asserting, that our debt is really diminishing. This is, it must be confessed, a new way of paying off old debts, and reminds one of the bottle conjurer, who persuaded a vast multitude that he could actually force himself into a quart decanter. The English, alas! seem fated to be the dupes of their own folly, and of the knavery and treachery of others. Let us now view him in the last part of his character, which I shall notice—let us look into his arrangements at home. Here we shall see him establishing a system of espionage, arming the mind of each man against his neighbour, making the whole country a kind of *Campus Martius*, tempting honest and industrious tradesmen from their families, by all the foppery and shew of Independent Companies; luring the husbandman and mechanic from their labour, with a few guineas and a watch; and kidnapping others, notwithstanding the hypocritical pretences which have been made to punish this practice. We see him

him attacking the liberty of the press, dragging persons to prison, and actually keeping them there many months, upon constructive treason and charges, which (thanks to the independence of some juries) have been proved false. We see him raising the watch-words of party-spirit, branding, either directly or by his agents, those with the title of Jacobins, Republicans, or Democrats, who dare to raise their voices against his measures, or to assert the birth-right of Britons.

We see him arranging a plan for saddling the nation with debts, which ought not to have met the eye of the public, and which ought, in honour and generosity, either never to have been contracted, or to have been paid by other means. We see too, and, alas! we feel, the dire effects of his domestic arrangements, in the alarming scarcity which has begun its career amongst us. It is idle to say that the War is not the cause of this, when it is well known that we have fed and supplied, not only our own troops, but many of the allies; when it is considered what stores we lost in Flanders and Holland; and that nearly five times as much provision is consumed by the same number of men in time of War, as in time of Peace. We see this man, at the very time when our ships ought to have, left Port, locking them fast in our harbours, by an embargo impolitic as it was unjust. Instead of laying the corn importation open to different competitors, and offering an additional bounty, we see him sending out Government Agents, with whom there could be no competition, and who damped the ardour of private adventurers: we see a foolish expedition planned for the Coast of France, and provisions taken from our own mouths to feed Chouans and Emigrants; and, I speak from authority when I say, that I know those, who even now see flour daily barreled up, and sent abroad. Yet this man has the insolence and cruelty to insult us in our calamity, and to tell us we must subscribe for the poor, when our pockets are already almost emptied by forced and voluntary contributions; he has the impudence to declare, that we must eat only one kind of bread; and, as if he meant to deride us, adds that we may eke out this bread by meat and other articles. Why have we been obliged to submit to this?

Merely

Merely to pamper the luxury, and gratify the ambition of a few individuals; to enable a haughty and oppressive Minister to wield the rod of power with a more weighty hand. After the Minister has got from the public upwards of one hundred thousand pounds for Powder Licences, he gravely advises them to leave off this luxury, when at the very time the butterflies of St. James's are shining in their gaudy honors, and the poor soldiers are obliged, for the sake of military decorum, to throw that flour upon their heads which their eager appetites would gladly convert into substantial food. It has been said, that the quantity used in this way is no object, but I am credibly informed, that in Danbury camp alone, which is by no means the largest, nearly thirty sacks are used in a week for this purpose. The average consumption is, I believe, one pound per man a week; nor will this appear over-rated, if it be divided into seven parts, which makes little more than two ounces per day. It is in vain to talk of relief in this dilemma from foreign markets. All we have to expect from the Baltic is acknowledged to be no more than about one hundred and fifty thousand quarters of corn, part of which has arrived, and is consumed, and the whole of which would not supply the kingdom for two days. That from Canada even Ministers acknowledge cannot arrive before August at the earliest; and after so long a voyage, and such an unfavourable season, it will, probably, like that from Dantzick, be very bad. Our own harvest must be backward, and, according to present appearances, will be very unproductive. The weather has been such, and our disasters have been so many, that it plainly appears as if an incensed Deity was fighting against us; the victories of our fleets have been of no real advantage, for ships of war taken from the enemy will neither supply us with money nor food, and these successes only tend to urge us on to our ruin.

Oh! could I write with the pen of Junius, or could I thunder with the eloquence of Demosthenes, I would endeavour to rouse my countrymen from their dreadful lethargy; I would bid them view the judgments of God which evidently hang over them, and see the finger of the Almighty, writing in the waters and in the clouds, that we are engaged in a war *unnecessary and unjust*; I would call
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to them to acknowledge his power, and to shake from their seats a corrupt administration, with the general and reverberated cry of PEACE! PEACE! PEACE! The blood of our countrymen would then no longer flow at the command of folly, obstinacy, and injustice; commerce would again pour her stores into our harbours; our cities would no longer mourn; and a merciful God would, perhaps, pity our distress, and give us a rich and early harvest. I fear, however, that *money, that root of all evil*, has corrupted our principles, debased our virtue, and sunk us to that state which has ever preceded the fall of nations, and fitted them for slavery, or prepared them for destruction. Interest, ambition, luxury, and dissipation, have deprived us of almost every manly and virtuous principle; and Britons, once the admiration of the world, have sunk into contemptible bullies, Machiavelian politicians, sordid stock-jobbers, voracious land-holders, profligate coxcombs, venal courtiers, and ignorant rioters and plunderers. Oh! my degraded, degenerate countrymen! rouse from your apathy; call up to view your noble ancestors, the Hampdens and Sydneys of former times; tear from your eyes the bandage of delusion, which your false fears have suffered an artful Minister to fix upon them, and boldly dare to tell him, and the world, that you will continue to be just and free. If however, you persist in your obstinacy and folly, I, as a citizen, have fulfilled my duty: I have warned you of your danger, I have described to you its sources, I have pointed out your remedy. I call Heaven to witness, that if my country must fall, I am at least thus innocent, and, whatever be the event, I am resolved to die as I have lived—

A PATRIOT.

